

THE
ANNUAL REPORT

OF THE
MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH

TO THE
LOOE URBAN DISTRICT
COUNCIL

FOR THE YEAR 1906.

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LOOE URBAN DISTRICT.

AREA—547 ACRES. POPULATION (CENSUS 1901) 2,535; ESTIMATED 2,591.

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FOR THE YEAR 1906.

To the Urban District Council.

GENTLEMEN,

I have the honour to present to you the Annual Report on the Health and Sanitary State of this District.

In the first quarter of the year we had a continuation of an epidemic of scarlet fever which was, however, on the wane. This disease had troubled the district with great persistency during the year 1905. In referring to this matter I desire again to remind the Council that the spread of this disease ceased with the thorough cleansing of the Council Schools, and also to draw your attention to the recommendations made in my last annual report, viz., that the Educational Authority should be called upon to make adequate arrangements for keeping the Schools clean and in a sanitary condition. At the present time I believe the labour provided to be quite insufficient for the purpose.

During the summer months we enjoyed immunity from disease of an epidemic nature. The scarlet fever epidemic had been stamped out. But towards the latter part of the year, the locality was visited by a widespread epidemic of whooping cough. As a consequence it was considered advisable to close the infant department of the School in November. In the fall of the year we also suffered from a visitation of influenza, of a severer type than I had seen for many years past in the locality. It was, however, happily unattended by fatal results.

It will be noted that the birth-rate was lower than in any previous year since the locality was brought under the jurisdiction of an Urban Council. The death-rate was also lower than I have before recorded, and the infantile mortality was reduced during the period under retrospection to almost a vanishing point. I feel that this satisfactory state of affairs in regard to the death-rate has been brought about in a great measure through the dissemination of useful knowledge, in regard to the nursing of the sick and the feeding of infants, through the medium of the District Nursing Association, and I venture to suggest that this Association should receive substantial support from the Guardians of the poor. The Guardians will, I hope, remember that it is the poor of a district who benefit by the work of this Association.

I again report with much satisfaction that our Zymotic disease death-rate was *Nil*. It is a happy circumstance that I am thus able to review and that you will be able, with pleasure and satisfaction, to examine the statistical tables in relation to disease and death. However, it is my duty to draw your attention to points which should be better in our locality, and which unfortunately, and perhaps unavoidably, are not yet brought to a higher state of perfection. The carrying out of my suggestions would, I know, minimise the risk of disease and thus help to keep our seaside town, which has become so justly popular, permanently before the public as a health resort.

I desire again to call your attention to the insanitary way in which the refuse of the town is collected, removed, and disposed of. The open bucket used for purpose of collection, often carried a great distance, and then placed in a conspicuous place to await the pleasure of the dustman for its removal, is objectionable in the extreme; the uncovered dust cart, that still parades a portion of our town in the busy hours of the day, is as insanitary as it is objectionable; while the method of the ultimate disposal of refuse has become a pressing question. It is clear to my mind that our beautiful beach and rocks and that our country lanes, in close proximity to the town, must be safeguarded against invasion by the dustman and the contents of his cart. A refuse destructor is badly needed and the use of a destructor appears to me to be the only really practical way of dealing with this question of the ultimate disposal of refuse. I trust that the Council will see its way to at once pass a bye-law that will place these matters on a more workable and sanitary footing.

Our town again enjoyed, during the holiday season of the year, a large share of patronage from visitors seeking change, health and recreation. Never indeed before have the towns seen such an influx of strangers, to enjoy the varied charms and the many outdoor pleasures which are so easily obtained owing to the natural resources of our district. But with this happy condition of prosperity for our community, there came to me an increasing number of complaints of defects in our surroundings, many of which can be easily remedied.

Prominently among them I may mention the nuisance from the nauseous effluvia emitted by the superheated oil, impregnated with fatty products, at the Sardine Factory. This matter has, I know, been pressed on your attention for redress; the questions involved are now before you, I believe, and I have but little doubt that wise counsels will prevail and that this nuisance will be abated. The condition of our quay walls, and particularly that of those at West Looe, remains in the same unsatisfactory state as of yore; the complaints are many and bitter that this condition of things is allowed to remain year after year. To my mind a grave defect exists in the drainage in the neighbourhood of the Guildhall. The Guildhall itself cannot be considered a sanitary building. The ventilation is very defective and the principle is quite opposed to all modern sanitary ideas. Apart, however, from this defect in the ventilation, the building appears to me to be in a bad condition; on the north side the walls are seen to be cracked and they undoubtedly permit sewage effluvia, arising from the defective (culvert) drain adjacent to the foundations on the north side, to enter the building. The main drain, an old mason's drain,

in Shutta, which takes the drainage from a large number of houses, including many new ones, must, in my opinion, be reconstructed with your approval. I think it is imperative that this work be carried out without delay. I desire to remind the Council, also, that the comfort and pleasure of the people in our town in summer is too often spoiled by the want of a proper watering of the streets in dry weather, and if you wish to keep and extend the reputation this locality has gained as a health resort, such matters as the keeping of our streets in a thoroughly sanitary state must receive more careful attention at your hands.

During the year fourteen new houses have been erected, and these, together with thirty-four other dwellings, have been provided with a water-carriage system of drainage. This undoubtedly is excellent work. The laying of the new main drain in Shutta Lane has also been completed so as to meet present-day requirements. I desire again to bring to your notice the necessity of making structural alterations in the public convenience at the base of the pier; this matter calls urgently for your attention.

It is with much concern that the majority of the inhabitants of the two towns see that the wooded site above Bridge End, West Looe, is still in jeopardy of being swept away by the ruthless hand of the builder. Cannot the Council come to some arrangement with the owner to preserve this beautiful entrance to our town? Surely this question is a most important one.

Gentlemen, I think it right to ask you to use your influence with and to lay before the Educational Authority of our Council Elementary Schools the necessity of a medical inspection of the scholars at least once in the year. In this way it would be possible to assist the teaching staff to discriminate between the normal and the abnormal child. A medical man would recognise in many cases the signs which are the precursors of ill-health in maturer years; defects also in hearing or in eyesight, diseases of the nose and throat, a bad condition of the teeth, or a general weakness on account of bad nutrition could be remedied, in many cases, by advice given by the medical man to the teachers and by the latter to the parents. In the Special Report on "Alleged Physical Deterioration of the People," issued by your County Council, we find among other causes mentioned "the pernicious habit of smoking by boys." I am sorry to say that in our town this practice exists to a very large extent. Quite a number of cases of poisoning by tobacco, in youths, have come under my notice, during the last year.

The physical features and general character of this district are attracting more and more attention year by year, and those in search of health and recreation are availing themselves in increasing numbers of the opportunities which this place affords. Our rugged sea-coast, famed for its beautiful green-fringed coves and beaches, offers attractions almost unrivalled in this country. The safety of the bathing is acknowledged, and the protection of the seaboard from sudden tempests and squalls affords an ample opportunity for the amateur boatman to enjoy his holiday. Our magnificently wooded inland scenery and the great variety in the fauna and flora invite the overstrained dwellers in towns to a leisure amid pleasant surroundings and to a change

of thought, which are equally beneficial in the restoration of health and happiness. Our peaceful rivers, too, which refuse to lend themselves to an undue strain on the part of the oarsman, add much to the pleasures which are to be found in our neighbourhood. In this peaceful spot, far away from everyday cares, our visitors can from the river revel in the lovely oak-bound banks, and from thence watch the flight and listen to the cries of the kingfisher, of the curlew or the seagull, while a sense of enjoyment and perfect rest, difficult indeed to procure in these days of struggle, steals over the erstwhile busy toilers.

During last August, while a heat-wave of exceptional severity was sweeping over our Island, rendering life in our cities and in many other parts of the country almost unbearable, we were living at Looe in a temperature that could be enjoyed by all. During the month of August our thermometers only showed a maximum temperature of 77.5° , with a minimum of 46.0° , giving a mean temperature of 61.6° . When we take this mitigation of summer's heat into consideration along with the mildness of our winter weather, which showed last year a mean temperature for December, January, February and March of 44.12° , we can rest assured that the excellence of our climate throughout the year has only to become better known to be further appreciated; especially will this be the case with those lately returned from a life spent in Eastern countries and by those wishing to escape the great fluctuations in temperature which the severity of our English winter generally involves.

HOUSE ACCOMMODATION.

By the building of so many houses of moderate rentals the accommodation for the labouring classes has been much improved. The position of the newly-erected houses allows of an abundance of sunshine and fresh air. The improvement which has taken place in the health of the members of the families which have left the low-lying locality of Church End for the hillside is almost wonderful.

WATER SUPPLY.

The houses on the Hannafore Estate suffered severely from an inadequate supply of water during the summer months. I understand that the Council is to acquire the control of the supply for this area of the district. In my mind it is clear that the whole of the public water supply should be under public control. Now that by meters the waste due to leakage and other causes has been checked, I feel that much has been accomplished towards giving the town a continuous supply of water during the summer months.

PLACES OVER WHICH THE COUNCIL HAS SUPERVISION.

The milk-shops and dairies, with one exception, when visited have been found in a satisfactory condition. I desire to call attention to the condition of the bakehouses; they are still unregistered in this town. I suggest that they may be registered at an early date. The cowsheds are also unregistered and this shortcoming should be removed; the existing cowsheds fall far short of the requirements as set forth in the Model Bye-Laws.

ISOLATION HOSPITAL.

The Council has not yet made any provision for the isolation of infectious cases. I believe it to be almost suicidal policy to allow this matter to remain in abeyance. It takes many years for a seaside resort to recover from the result of an epidemic, like the one which visited Plymouth during the last two years.

ZYMOTIC DISEASE.

The Zymotic disease-rate has been much smaller than it was last year, viz., 8·87. Twenty-one cases of scarlet fever and two cases of diphtheria were notified. It is satisfaction to again be able to record that no case of enteric fever has been reported.

I think it will be a good thing for me to briefly recapitulate the sanitary measures which need your careful consideration, and I cannot help expressing my regret that this last year was so barren in the matter of making good the sanitary defects which have been brought to your notice. The chief sanitary measures requiring attention are as follows:—

1.—The removal of the nuisance caused by the Sardine Factory at West Looe.

2.—The defective condition of the drains in the neighbourhood of the Guildhall.

3.—The drainage of Beech Terrace.

4.—The want of sanitary accommodation in the Church Schools.

5.—The condition of the public conveniences at the base of East Looe Pier.

6.—That your laws dealing with the mode of removal of house refuse may be enforced.

BIRTHS.

The total number of births recorded during the year was 46, 26 males and 20 females, 31 in East Looe and 15 in West Looe. This is a birth-rate of 17·71 per 1,000.

MORTALITY.

The total number of deaths recorded during the year was 24, viz., 11 male and 13 female, 13 occurred in East Looe and 11 in West Looe. This is an estimated death-rate of 9·26 per 1,000. The chief causes of death were as follows:—

Old Age	3	Heart Disease	2
Paralysis	3	Other Causes	9
Kidney Disease	3		—
Pneumonia	2		24
Tubercular Disease	2		—

Nine deaths occurred at the age of 70 and upwards, viz.:—one at 70, one at 72, one at 74, one at 75, one at 77, one at 78, one at 79, and one at 81.

INFANTILE MORTALITY.

The death-rate per 1,000 births was 21·72. Only one death occurred during the first year of life, and this death was due to unavoidable causes in the birth.

ZYMOTIC DEATH-RATE.—*Nil.*

ZYMOTIC DISEASE.

Twenty-three cases of Zymotic Disease were notified during the year, viz., 21 cases of scarlet fever and 2 cases of diphtheria. These figures give a Zymotic Disease-rate of 8·87.

I am, Gentlemen,

Your obedient Servant,

JOHN EUSTACE WEBB, M.B., F.R.I.P.H.,

M.O.H. Looe Urban District Council.

KERSWILL HOUSE, LOOE.

15th January, 1907.



